**Faith to Grow in Christ**

**by Pastor Fee Soliven**

**James 2:19-26**

**Wednesday Evening**

**March 31, 2021**

**James 2:19-26**

19 You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe--and tremble! 20 But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?

22 Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? 23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God. 24 You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.

25 Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way? 26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

**19 You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe--and tremble!**

Saints, the acceptance of a creed (even a true one) is not enough to save anyone. The demons have complete and thorough conviction that there is one God, but they are terrified by that truth. They believe in God only to hate and resist him in every way they can.

**Mark 5:1-14**

1 Then they came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gadarenes. 2 And when He had come out of the boat, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, 3 who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no one could bind him, not even with chains,

4 because he had often been bound with shackles and chains. And the chains had been pulled apart by him, and the shackles broken in pieces; neither could anyone tame him. 5 And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones. 6 When he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshiped Him.

7 And he cried out with a loud voice and said, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God that You do not torment me." 8 For He said to him, "Come out of the man, unclean spirit!"

9 Then He asked him, "What is your name?" And he answered, saying, "My name is Legion; for we are many." 10 Also he begged Him earnestly that He would not send them out of the country. 11 Now a large herd of swine was feeding there near the mountains. 12 So all the demons begged Him, saying, "Send us to the swine, that we may enter them."

13 And at once Jesus gave them permission. Then the unclean spirits went out and entered the swine (there were about two thousand); and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and drowned in the sea. 14 So those who fed the swine fled, and they told it in the city and in the country. And they went out to see

Saints, the demons tremble in terror and demonstrate that their “faith” is real, though misdirected.

**20 But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?**

Saints, James addresses his hypothetical person who held the above views, calling that person a fool. The foolish person is literally a “hollow man.” If the faith around which we build our lives turns out to be empty, we are truly hollow people. When will you ever learn that faith that does not result in good deeds is useless?

There are times when we need more teaching or understanding in order to respond to God’s direction. But most often we know what needs to be done, yet are unwilling to act. When it comes to putting into practice what we know, is it our habit to obey God?

**21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?**

Saints, from his own case studies, James now turns to historical figures from the Old Testament that he expects will confirm what he has been teaching about the importance of active faith. Abraham was one of the Old Testament figures most revered by the Jews.

Abraham’s remarkable obedience in being willing to sacrifice his son at God’s command was evidence of the works for which Abraham was declared right with God.

**Genesis 22:4-14**

4 Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off. 5 And Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you." 6 So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together.

7 But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." Then he said, "Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" 8 And Abraham said, "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering." So the two of them went together.

9 Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. 10 And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. 11 But the Angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."

12 And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me." 13 Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son.

14 And Abraham called the name of the place, The-Lord-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, "In the Mount of The LORD it shall be provided."

Saints, what was Abraham doing when he offered his son Isaac on the altar?

He was trusting God. The lesson we can draw from Abraham’s life is not a comparison between his sacrifices and ours. We can expect that in one way or another, our faith will have to grow from internal trust to external action. Eventually, like Abraham, we too will have to answer the question, “Do I really trust God?”

**22 Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?**

Saints, Abraham had great faith in God,

**Genesis 15:4-6**

4 And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir." 5 Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." 6 And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.

Saints, James points out that Abraham’s faith was much more than just belief in the one God—the fruit of Abraham’s great faith was in his deeds: His faith was made complete by what he did—by his actions. His faith produced his actions, and his actions completed his faith, meaning they “perfected” or “matured” it.

Mature and complete believers are produced through perseverance in trials; mature and complete faith is produced through works of obedience to God. Faith and works should not be confused with each other, but neither can they be separated from each other.

**1 Thessalonians 1:3-6**

3 remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father, 4 knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God. 5 For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.

**23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God.**

Saints, Abraham believed God, so God gave Abraham the status of a right relationship with him—and this happened before Abraham’s noted works (such as his willingness to sacrifice Isaac), and even before Abraham was circumcised. Saints we just read when “Abraham believed God, so God declared him to be righteous.“

Saints, James showed that Abraham’s righteousness was the basis and reason for all those actions. Because of Abraham’s great faith and obedience, he held the privileged status of being called “the friend of God”

**2 Chronicles 20:7**

"Are You not our God, who drove out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel, and gave it to the descendants of Abraham Your friend forever?"

**Isaiah 41:8**

"But you, Israel, are My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, The descendants of Abraham My friend."

**24 You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.**

Saints, James is simply saying that if you ‘say' you are a Christian, then there had better be some appropriate works manifested or your faith is false. This sentiment is echoed in:

**1 John 2:4**

"If you say you have come to know Him, yet you do not keep His commandments, then the truth is not in you and you are a liar."

Apparently, there were people who were saying they were Christians, but were not manifesting any of the fruit of Christianity. Can this faith justify? Can the dead ‘faith' that someone has which produces no change in a person and no good works before men and God be a faith that justifies? Absolutely not.

It is not merely enough to say you believe in Jesus. You must actually believe and trust in Him. If you actually do, then you will demonstrate that faith by a changed and godly life. If not, then your profession is of no more value than the same profession of demons: "We believe Jesus lived."

**25 Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way?**

Saints, in the same way, even Rahab the prostitute was made right with God by her actions. God’s final judgment on a person’s life considers the righteousness that person shows through works. But why would James bring up Rahab? After speaking of the great faith of Abraham, the father of Israel, James cited the example of Rahab, a pagan woman with a bad reputation.

But these two people, as opposite as they were, cemented James’s argument—both people were made right with God on the basis of their actions that resulted from their faith. The contrast is not between faith and works, but between genuine faith and false faith.

**Hebrews 11:30-31**

30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days. 31 By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace.

**26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.**

Saints, faith and good deeds are as important to each other as body and spirit. Good deeds are not added to faith; instead, the right kind of faith is faith that “works,” that results in good deeds. Otherwise, Christianity is nothing more than an idea. No one is moved to action without faith; no one’s faith is real unless it moves him or her to action. The action is obedience to God.

This draws us back to James’s words in the first part of this chapter concerning care for others. The believer must do what God calls him to do—serve his brothers and sisters in Christ, refuse to discriminate among them, and help them out with good deeds.

**Galatians 5:6**

"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love"

God does not want a faith that is empty and hypocritical. James Chapter 2 is talking about those who "say" that they have faith but have no works. Therefore, people cannot tell if they are true believers or not, because there is no fruit. That kind of a faith is useless and is not a saving faith. True faith results in true works.

Saints, Soon and Very soon, Jesus is about to appear, we are almost out of here!

**1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**

13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

**1 Corinthians 15:50-54**

50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed-- 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

**Short Movie Slide>**

**Acts 2:38-39**

38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

**Let’s Pray!**

**Benediction**

**"May The LORD bless you and keep you, May The LORD make His face shine upon you, May The LORD be gracious to you, May The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you His (Shalom) peace.” In Jesus Name!**